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A

S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

OF THE
Governors of the *Magdalen* Charity,

On THURSDAY MAY 1, 1766.

IN THE

Parish Church of St. MARTIN's in the Fields.

BY NEWTON OGLE, D. D.
DEAN of WINCHESTER.

The SECOND EDITION.

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M DCC LXXI.

At DRAPERS HALL, May 1, 1766.

At a Special GENERAL COURT.

Resolved,

THAT the Thanks of this Court be returned to the Reverend Dr. NEWTON OGLE, for his excellent Sermon preached before them this Day; and that he be desired to cause the same to be printed and published.

By Order of the Court,

A WINTERBOTTOM Sec.

St. JOHN VIII. 10, 11.

----- *Woman, where are those thine Accusers? Hath no Man condemned thee? She said no Man, Lord: And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.*

IT is not peculiar to the charitable Institution, in Behalf of which I am to solicit your Favor, to be mistaken or misrepresented in the World: The Passage of Sacred History, to which my Text relates, has experienced the same Fate: Offence has been taken at the Words of our Lord, as seeming rather to encourage a Vice which justly deserves our severest Censure; and, under this View, some Critics have been employed in collecting Arguments against the genuineness of the Story, supposing it to be no Part of the original Gospel, but to have been inserted afterwards from oral

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Tradi-

Tradition. The chief Argument ^a on which their Objections rest, would equally tend to disprove some other Parts of Holy Scripture; since nothing is more common than for one Manuscript to contain Parts which another omits; a very natural Consequence of the Method in which Books were then multiplied: For as to the internal Marks of Genuineness, which this Story carries with it, nothing stronger can be required. It is not only extremely natural in every Circumstance, but may likewise be known by the pointed, concise, and forcible Manner which every where distinguishes the Replies of our Lord: It is perfectly agreeable to his mild and forbearing

^a Nimirum historiam hanc quod, ut videtur, expedire non putarent ut coram populo legeretur, obelo jam olim jugularent, in libris præsertim publicis. Ωβελισμένην autem εόque ipso ceu suspectam præteriisse mox librarios, id verò extra dubium esse arbitror. Unde nec mirum si defuerit in Codd. aliq. etiam ante tempora Hieronymi, ac in commentariis Græcorum. Utcunque se res habet, non prætermissem fuisse certè quod Joannem Auctorem non habuerit, vel ex hinc constat, quod jam inde ab ipso Joannis seculo pro canonicâ legeretur. Retinent Steph. omn. plerique & Codd. eorum qui in manus nostras inciderunt, exceptis supra memoratis.

MILLIUS in locum.

Spirit;

Spirit; nor is it less of a Piece with the well-known insidious Character of the Jewish Teachers, who on other Occasions, as in the Affair of Tribute-Money, and in the Question concerning *John* the Baptist, endeavour to surprize him with artful Questions.

As to the Encouragement to Sin, which some pretend to discover in our Saviour's Reply, that will vanish when the Story is placed in its true Light.

The Law of *Moses*, the Severity of which our Lord came to mitigate, had directed that Persons caught in the Crime of Adultery should be punished with Death. But had our Lord, when appealed to in this Case, declared for the Execution of this Sentence, he might have incurred the Displeasure of the *Romans*, who wisely restrained the Civil Power of the *Jews* wherever it interfered with the Spirit of their own Laws. Had he given a milder Determination, he might have exposed himself to the Resentment of his own Countrymen

for slighting the Authority of their Law-giver; he therefore prudently declines taking upon himself the Decision of the Question; but, when further pressed by these designing Men, takes this Occasion to expose and confound their Malice, by only reminding them of the faulty Condition of Humanity, which, so far from having a Right to scrutinize the Failings of others, has nothing to do but to look at Home for Motives of Compassion. “He that is without Sin among you let him first cast a Stone at her.” The Word Sin need not here be confined to the Crime of Adultery: The Consciousness of any other Breach of Duty would be sufficient to rebuke a Mind not lost to all Sense of Shame. Nor was it likely that, in such a mixt Company, every Man’s Conscience should labour exactly under the same Kind of Condemnation.

Our Lord having got rid of these Spies on his Conduct, proceeds to give us his real Sentiments on this Occasion—“Woman, says he, where are thine Accusers?” Intimating, that a Punishment so extremely severe should not be inflicted but upon the fullest

left Evidence, and after legal Condemnation.—On being told that none appeared, “neither do I condemn thee”, says he; *i. e.* “it is not my Business to inforce this rigorous Sentence; I am therefore left at Liberty to shew my Approbation of the merciful Side, and to leave this Direction for the future Treatment of Persons in thy Circumstances, that they be not suffered to perish in a State of Despair, but be admonished, be encouraged, be assisted to sin no more^b.”

I have been longer in defending and explaining this Passage in the Life of our Lord, because it naturally leads our Thoughts to the Motives which influenced his Conduct, and in so doing opens the very best Way of considering the Subject before us, and of applying his Example and Authority, so far as Difference of Age and Circumstances allow, in Support of this new but well-projected Charity.

^b It is obvious that our Lord here disapproves the Severity of the Mosaic Law, in the Place of which he came to substitute that of Mercy and Truth: But it is no less obvious, that his Censure of this Sin is implied in the Words SIN NO MORE.

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The first Reflection which presents itself to us, is the Motive towards Forbearance with others, which is here drawn from the Consciousness of infirmity in ourselves. Nature itself seems to dictate that we should have " Compassion on the Ignorant, and on those that are out of the Way," for this very Reason, because " we also are compassed about with Infirmity." Thus even our Failings may not be wholly without their Use, when they enable us to conceive the true Condition of others, and dispose us to that charitable Allowance, of which We all stand in mutual need. Yet, powerful as this Motive may seem, we find too little Use made of it: Pride turns us away from beholding our own Faults, directing our Attention to those of other Men, whose Frailties appear to set-off our Virtues, and thus help to put us in better Humour with ourselves. Hence that Want of Forbearance so observable in some Men, and yet so unbecoming the Condition of Man: Hence it follows, that Similarity of Condition too often produces the reverse of what it ought to do,

do, making us envious and hard-hearted. But how very different from this, how superior, and enlarged is that Forbearance which is discoverable in the Behaviour and Character of our Lord? How intimately is he touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities? What Allowance does he make for the Weakness, the Prejudices, the Imperfections, which cleave to human Nature: We conceive immediate Offence at the bad Action on its first presenting itself; his all-seeing Eye takes in a more enlarged Compass, sees every minute Circumstance of Alleviation, every distant Cause in its Embryo, which, too regularly perhaps, unfolded itself into the Enormity which followed. And though he no where declares Sin to be venial merely on Account of human Frailty, yet has he strongly suggested to us, that wrong Behaviour is not the Result of Malice and Depravity alone. How does he himself find an Apology for the Frailties and Prejudices of his own Disciples? With what Pity does he behold the Folly and Impetuosity of the madding Multitude? And, when led out to suffer Death, it is on the same superior Principle

ciple that he intercedes for his Enemies. “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do : ” They have been insensibly led by a Progression of Causes to this last Excess of Phrensy. In short, he no where expresses himself with Asperity, but at the odious Hypocrisy, the pretended Virtue of the solemn *Pharisee*. — Such Men exclude themselves from Mercy by disclaiming their Need of it.

When we see then this Delinquent brought before our Lord, we must allow his Behaviour to be nothing more than what is agreeable to his Character on other Occasions. He came not to take Advantage of our Infirmities, but to rescue us from them : He came not to “ break the bruised Reed, but to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was sick. He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should have everlasting Life.”

But though the Mercy and Forbearance of our Lord be on every Occasion just and well-placed, yet may we observe a Mercy more bordering on Tendernefs and Pity in
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those Cases where female Distress calls upon him. How immediately is he affected at seeing the Widow, whose only Son was carried dead out of the City? “When he saw her he had Compassion on her, and said unto her weep not.” — And though Partiality to his own Friends was not what in any Degree distinguished his Character, to whom every good Disciple was as his “Brother, and his Sister, and his Mother;” yet is there a Mark of tender Concern for the Distresses to which a helpless Woman is exposed, which is visible in the short but expressive Notice he takes of his own Mother, as he was led to Crucifixion. “When Jesus therefore saw his Mother, and the Disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto her, Woman, behold thy Son: Then saith he to the Disciple behold thy Mother.” As if he had said, “protect her from the Ignominy to which on my Account she may be exposed, from the Malice of a censorious World, with which a Woman can but ill contend, supply my Place, be unto her a Son.”

These indeed are Instances of Compassion for female Distress merely as such; yet we do not find that his Pity was withheld from those whose Crimes might have raised his Indignation. *Mary Magdalen*, whose Defence he so warmly takes up against the rude Censure of his Disciples, had been a Sinner to whom much had been forgiven. The Offender, whose History is the Subject of these Reflections, was confessedly such. Indeed the inferior Condition of Women in this World, the peculiar Inconveniences to which they are often exposed, make this Demand on a generous Mind, justly lessen our Indignation, and give a softer Colouring to our Pity. A greater Delicacy of Frame, a greater Sensibility seems to be the Characteristic of the Sex; and is perhaps the only Source of that Inferiority in which Men so unjustly triumph: As every Thing is beautiful in its Order, so is likewise this Constitution intended by Providence to fit them for the Place they hold, and to be the Cause of that Happiness in the Creation, which another Kind of Constitution would not so well have produced. But in this corrupt

rupt World Things are out of Order ! That very Constitution, which the Author of Nature intended for good, too often exposes them to an unequal Contest, and instead of being for their Welfare “ becomes unto them an Occasion of Falling.” For as the Intercourse of Mankind increases, so do the Causes of Temptation. Luxury and Leisure multiply the Number of Seducers, Licentiousness introduces Opportunity, and vast Difference of Fortune often makes the Tempter too strong for the tempted.

When we confine our View to the lower Ranks of Life, these Dangers become greater and more inevitable: How many of this Sort fall almost a necessary Prey to the Indigence of their Condition, or to that want of good Principles, which the early Loss of Parents, or the unavoidable Connection with bad People, too regularly produce? Some prove unable to contend with superior Art and Abilities exerted in their Ruin; others fall a Prey to Baits laid for their Vanity; a Vice which, at this Season of Life, calls at least for some Allowance. Even

Ignorance, Timidity, and, what is terrible to say! Childhood itself may be urged in Extenuation of the Guilt of some. Where shall we in such Cases fix the greater Blame? On the Seducer, or the seduced? Yet one by cruel Custom has been condemned to eternal infamy, has even been supposed incapable of Reformation, whilst the other is permitted to glory in his Shame, or at least to escape with Impunity. Even so long ago as in the Time of our Lord, one of the Parties seems to have escaped without Notice, while the other was led out to public Shame and Punishment.

Houses of Charity have been opened for every Malady incident to Man. The Aged, the Maimed, the Sick, the Foundling, the Woman Labouring of Child, even those polluted by the foul Effects of their own Vices, have justly been admitted to a Share of our Bounty: These unfortunate Persons alone were precluded all Means of Return. Sober Virtue had been accustomed to hold them in Abhorrence, and Vice, afraid to avow their Cause, basely assumed a Merit in joining

ing the Cry against them. Thus shut out on every Side, no Resource was left them, but that of Despair; no Support, but from pursuing their miserable Trade, and plunging still deeper and deeper in Wickedness. The rash, the cruel Sentence was gone forth, that if once bad, they must for ever remain so; a Conclusion as inconsistent with the Spirit of Humanity as it is with that of Religion! A Conclusion calculated only to encourage the Evil which it too hastily presumes! — If Returns from Sin be impossible, what shall we make of that Declaration of our Saviour, “That he came not to call the Righteous but Sinners to Repentance?” What shall we make of the professed Design of the Gospel itself, which though of old censured for this Invitation to Sinners, yet may justly glory in what was made a Cause of Offence; since no other Scheme could have suited the frail Nature of Man; none could so well have displayed the Mercy and Goodness of God?

Nature itself tallies with this Doctrine of Repentance, and seems to intend, that as we
advance

advance in Years we should advance in Self-recollection, and spiritual Improvement: Every Thing points this way: Our Experience of the Deceitfulness of Sin, our Disappointments, and increasing Infirmities, are as visibly intended to induce a serious Turn of Mind, as Autumn itself is to prepare the Way for Winter: And the sinful Course, in which these unfortunate Women have been engaged, seems even to lead to a more early Repentance: The very Nature of their Crime tends sooner to extinguish the Practice of it; and, from the many Evils which are the Consequence of their Sins, may have a natural Effect in disposing them to a Change of Mind, to a real Sorrow for Sin.

Suffer then at least the Miseries of human Life to produce their natural Effect, and if these unhappy Women through their Misfortune, or even through their own Blame, have been early led into the Paths of Vice, yet exclude them not now from the Possibility of returning into the right Way, and making up what has been lost, before the
Day

Day of Life be too far spent, before Disease and Want anticipate the Effects of old Age, and bring them to an untimely End. Some there may be in this Tribe of Sinners, in whom original good impressions are not yet entirely lost; some there may be, who laden with Sin and Misery, seek only to lay down their Burdens, and be at rest; a Privilege which, till these Gates were thrown open, seems to have been denied to many of them. It is for the Relief of such, that we are united in this charitable Undertaking; it is for such that we now solicit your Assistance; and amidst the Variety of those who, in this vast Metropolis, pursue the Trade of Sin, many such, we may reasonably suppose, many such, we are well assured, are to be found. And let not the Libertine deride the attempt, or unfairly represent it as a romantic Scheme wholly to extirpate Vice: Such an Effect, how much soever to be wished, is far beyond all human Strength, and therefore much exceeds the discreet and modest Views of this Institution. It is but a partial Degree of Good, a Degree far short of what Speculation promises, which the
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Imperfection and Perversity of human Affairs allow us to produce even in our best, and most approved Plans of Charity. It is possible that Hypocrisy may here too insinuate itself: Inveterate Habits may here too break out afresh: Cures may here too prove imperfect: But Failures, we trust, are not more common in this Charity, than in those which undertake the Cure of other Maladies: And from the various wise Provisions, which from Time to Time are made, and which the Governors of this Charity are still willing to extend, as Experience shall give them Insight, our List of Incurables will not, we hope, be found to disgrace the Institution: That Incurables have been dismissed, is an infallible Proof, that Pains are here taken to cure.

Let us not then be deterred from doing Good because we cannot do all the Good we wish: To repel effectually the Torrent of Vice in a rich and luxurious Age, would be as vain an Attempt as that of bridling the Ocean itself: But though we cannot still the raging of the Sea, yet by degrees we bank it out,

it out, and gain upon it; and prevent, at least, such Overflowings as might end in general Ruin. Attempts of this Kind are now become necessary, and should be made to accompany our Increase of Empire, Wealth, and Luxury; to counteract, if possible, the bad Effects, the Allurements to Vice, the actual Crimes which these encourage and introduce. Where Industry and Simplicity of Manners prevail, the Demand for these public Remedies is not so great; The Virtues and Vices of Mankind are there confined to a narrower Plan: It is in rich and polished States that Vice and Misery are found in their greatest Extremes: It is in these that we are therefore called upon for greater Exertions of public Spirit. Many Advantages, indeed, attend the Increase of Wealth and Power; but there is a melancholy Alloy in these Advantages, a Maximum of Good in the Affairs of Men. Great Wealth produces great Inequality, great Inequalities great Luxury; these open new Veins of Vice, and tend unavoidably to corrupt those whose Condition less allows of Corruption: Who, if, with a Taste for

D Pleasure,

Pleasure, they have once acquired an Aversion from Labor, are either tempted to recur to unlawful Means to gratify their Wants, or must patiently submit to that Misery which is the Consequence of their Irregularities. Hence in the Midst of Plenty and Prosperity no Sight is more common than that of partial Misery, and partial Want: Hence of course ensues an Indifference to the married State, Looseness of Morals, Incontinency, Debauchery. Can we alter this Situation of Things, or reduce the Manners of a great and opulent People to a State of Simplicity? That, we fear, is impossible.—The Patient, who has injured his Constitution by high-living, admits not of being sent back to the Milk of Babes: Nor will a full-grown luxuriant Nation endure such Regulations as in an infant and feeble State would produce good Effects: Correctives and Palliatives are all that we can here apply; such Remedies as may prevent the Increase, though they do not wholly remove the Cause, of Evil. Such is the charitable Foundation in Support of which we are now assembled; which if it take but
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off the Overflowings of Vice; if it save but one Soul in ten from Death, our Labour is not lost, neither shall we lose our Reward.

We pretend not then in this Place to reform the Manners of the Age, or to repress that Ostentation, and Self-indulgence which are the almost necessary Attendants on national Grandeur. We pretend not to abridge the pleasures of the Great, or to lessen that Number of Domesticks who are, most of them, detained in a State too favourable to Vice: But we intreat you to consider, that if your Enjoyment of these Pleasures, these Conveniences, has a certain, though distant, effect, in multiplying Temptations to Sin, in promoting Celibacy, in corrupting Manners, we intreat you, I say, to consider the increasing Obligation you incur, of compensating in some Sort the Evil which Custom obliges you to create.

Some tacit Conviction of this Kind seems to prevail in the World, and to be at the Bottom of those many Charities which distinguish the present Age. God has so mer-

cifully ordered Things, that Evil in some Measure tends to defeat itself, and in its Turn gives Rise to Good. For unless Evil increasing on one Hand be on the other balanced by a Proportion of Good, Vice and Misery, it is plain, must be continually gaining Ground. That this desirable End is in one shape answered by the MAGDALEN Charity, even those, who rate its Advantages at the lowest, must be forced to allow. It rescues, from present Misery at least, some of the most forlorn and wretched of the human Species; many of whom have been brought into this sad Condition more by their Misfortune than by their Fault. From a Life (if such a State can be called Life^a) of Vice, Despair, and Idleness, it restores them to a sober Course of moderate Labor; which, should it have no other Effect than what we allow to the mere Force of Habit, must, even on this Footing, tend by Degrees to reform and better their Dispositions. Above all it leaves them Room for Reflection, which in their former Way of Life had been totally suppressed; and which,

^a 1 Tim. v. 6.

by the Grace of God, may here be improved to that Concern for their eternal Welfare, of which it would be cruel to suppose these to be the only Sinners incapable. That the Governors of this Charity frequently find their Cares thus rewarded, might easily be shewn, but that Delicacy forbids them to make public the History of private Persons, and thus deprives them of that most convincing Method of Vindication, which arises from Appeals to Matter of Fact. Difficulties undoubtedly there are, in the Execution of this charitable Design, which, to many of its Friends may, at present, seem to abate of its usefulness: And which, in such Attempts as these, nothing but long Experience can effectually teach us to avoid. Yet even these Difficulties, have been hitherto got over beyond Expectation; and the increasing Attention of the Public to this Charity, gives Room to hope, that in Time they may be wholly removed; and the practicability of the Scheme be as little controverted as the Necessity, of some such Scheme, at present is.

More

More might be said on this Subject—but let us not lose Sight of that Consideration, which, in the present Case, weighs more than all: The Impossibility of otherwise restoring, to the Favour of God and Man, these our lost and unfortunate Fellow Creatures. Mere Admonition and Exhortation reach not, we too well know, the Case of abandoned Vice.—Those whom Satan has long bound in Chains of Sin, require uncommon Force to set them free.—The Words of our Lord might sink deep, and produce a real Change of Mind in this poor Woman, who, the Gospel informs us, was brought before him; but if, in the present State of the World, we would effectually imitate our Lord's Example in reforming such Persons, we must first remove those Obstacles of Want, False-Shame, and evil Habits, which stand in the Way of their Amendment. We must not only exhort, but we must encourage them, we must teach them, we must enable them “TO SIN NO MORE”.

F I N I S.

